



Drinking Water and Churches

Fact Sheet

Why Am I a Public Water System?

“A Public Water System is any facility that has at least fifteen (15) service connections or regularly serves an average of at least twenty-five (25) individuals daily for at least sixty (60) days per year.” If your system does not serve at least twenty-five (25) of the *same* persons over six (6) months of the year, you are classified as a transient non-community water system.

How Does the Safe Drinking Water Act Apply to Me?

As a transient non-community water system, your facility is required to sample the water for 2 contaminants, total coliform and nitrate. Total coliform is required once during every calendar quarter which your system is in operation, and nitrate is required once per year.

Why is it Important to Sample for Total Coliform?

Total coliforms are common bacteria in the environment and are generally not harmful themselves. The presence of these bacteria in drinking water indicates that the water may be contaminated with other organisms that may cause disease. Disease symptoms may include diarrhea, cramps, nausea, and vomiting.

How Do I Sample for Total Coliform?

If your facility is a groundwater system serving fewer than 1,000 persons, you will sample once per calendar quarter from a drinking water tap in your church.

If your system’s routine quarterly test is unsatisfactory (test shows presence of coliform), you will be required to collect a set of 4 repeat samples and have them analyzed. At least 1 of the 4 samples must be collected from the same sample tap as the original unsatisfactory sample. All 4 repeat samples **must** be collected on the same day.

If any **repeat** sample is total coliform positive, your system has exceeded the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) and are required to post public notification.

All public water systems are required to collect 5 distribution samples the month after any unsatisfactory total coliform sample (*i.e. If you collect a routine sample on July 10 for third quarter and it is total coliform positive, you will collect 4 repeat samples as soon as you are notified of the positive sample and you will also collect 5 routine samples in August*).

***Why Should I
Sample for Nitrate?***

Nitrate and nitrite are chemicals that are used in fertilizers and are found in waste from humans and/or farm animals. They generally enter drinking water as a result of those activities. Nitrate can convert to nitrite in the body and can cause many health problems.

Immediate health effects include “blue baby syndrome” which commonly affects infants under 6 months. “Blue baby syndrome” is caused by the conversion of nitrate to nitrite in the body, which can interfere with the oxygen carrying capacity of the child’s blood. This can be an acute condition whereby the child’s health deteriorates rapidly over a period of days. Symptoms include shortness of breath and blueness of skin.

***How Do I Sample for
Nitrate?***

All public water systems must monitor for nitrate. All groundwater systems must sample annually. This sample is taken at the entry point to your system (the first place you can draw water after any treatment, or the tap closest to the well if there is not any treatment.) The maximum contaminant level (MCL) for nitrate is 10 mg/liter.

If your sample results are higher than 10 mg/liter, but less than 20 mg/liter, continuous public notification will be required and the water cannot be served to children under 6 months of age.

In addition, if your sample results are higher than 20 mg/liter, then you will be required to sample quarterly for nitrate.

***Who Do I Contact if
I Have Any
Questions?***

You should contact the *IDEM Drinking Water Branch* if you have any questions. Our number is (317)308-3282. You may also contact the *IDEM Environmental Helpline* at (800)451-6027, or the *EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline* at (800)426-4791.

Rule Citations

327 IAC 8-2-4, 327 IAC 8-2-4.1, 327 IAC 8-2-7, 327 IAC 8-2-8, and 327 IAC 8-2-8.1.

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